

USES OF SPACE, FREEDOMS AND CONSTRAINTS

São Paulo, Clean City: a case study

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Abstract: The sensible forms that stand the daily experience of movement through urban space in outdoor advertising are one of the most conducive to the exercise of social life. However, outdoor advertising imposing on a dialogical relationship is not always peaceful, perceived as a threat to the order (disorder) of the city. Can the ads stop wanting to affirm the place of persuasion, seduction and poetics in the context of contemporary urban life? On September 26, 2006, the Municipality of São Paulo, Brazil, approved the Clean City Law, seeking a ban on outdoor advertising. Since then, a fierce controversy has occupied citizens, politicians, architects, planners, publicists, and artists, among different types of actors in defense of views sometimes radically irreconcilable. It is our belief that underlying such a discussion there are different notions of happiness, individual or collective, in its particular application to space and culture of the city, in preparation of the World Cup 2014 (in São Paulo).

Keywords: uses of urban space; outdoor advertising; happiness; freedoms and constraints.

Introduction

A visit to the city of São Paulo, before 2007, would hardly fail to impress the sight due to the visual impact outdoor advertising originated in the landscape. Side by side with some buildings or structures of architectural and cultural interest, the excessive expression of profuse and often blatant commercial messages in the landscape stood out. As if fighting among themselves, in an attempt to break with a certain indifference and general apathy of bystanders, billboards, plastic sheets, neon signs and even large-scale commercial signs, composed of bold letters, already showed the limits of tolerance to the visibility space of a city that, at the same time, presented itself in its seemingly infinite immenseness. Above all, São Paulo acted as a city of spectacle which had no other pretense rather than the celebration of entertainment and consumption through the transformation into an image of a culture that is exhilarating and, as such, thirsty of the permanent invention of New.

If, on the one hand, the visual landscape of São Paulo would suit Guy Debord (1992 [1967]) as an illustrative example of the concept of «society of the spectacle», on the other, it would also provide a similar experience to the one Jean Baudrillard undertook traversing some of the major cities of the sidereal *America* (1986) of the eighties, from which resulted a paradigmatic essay on the hyper-real character of modernity. Above

all, this would be a case that would serve as opportune stimulus to a reflection on the *Perpetual Euphoria* (Bruckner, 2002), the frenzy of pleasure and consumption, that characterize the contemporary Western culture, whose ethical value somehow ended up depleting itself with the crisis of modernity.

To the surprise of many, on the 26th of September of 2006, the São Paulo Municipal Chamber approved the *Clean City Law*¹, with the purpose of regulating the use of urban space by the commercial visual communication, that is to say, restricting outdoor advertising and indicative ads.

1. On the notion of happiness

Immediately associated to pleasure and to virtue, happiness can be understood as an individual «problem»², but also as a fundamental value to social and political life. Having, finally, the application of the concept to the case study we intend to discuss, it is important to refer to this double meaning.

Let us question first the nature of happiness from the notion of pleasure. Can pleasure simply be defined as a good, as a virtue to which all aspire? Is pleasure closely associated to human nature, in the sense that we try to avoid pain and, as such, we tend to pleasure?

Either way, attributing value to pleasure is not completely consensual. For Plato, pleasure in itself is not necessarily good, to the extent that the first is not, strictly speaking, the opposite of evil that pain, for example, would mean. Aristotle alerts, too, to the existence of different kinds of pleasures, some arising from virtuous actions, others from less virtuous ones. For the latter, pleasure is mostly associated with activity. Aristotle says, «without activity there is no pleasure». And considering, with the words of the philosopher, that life is a sort of activity, pleasure can be understood as a universal quality if we bear in mind that, supposedly, «everyone wishes to live». Good and evil are proper not of the pleasures themselves, but of the activities they

¹ The Prefecture of São Paulo, under Gilberto Kassab's mandate, who was then Prefect of the São Paulo Municipal Chamber, regulated, by a decree published in the Official Journal of the City, on the 6th of December of 2006, Law No. 14.223, aiming to eliminate visual pollution in São Paulo, to prohibit all kinds of external advertising, such as billboards, panels on facades of buildings, back lights and front lights and also advertisements on taxis, buses and bicycles. The legislation also sought to restrict indicative ads, that is to say, those that identify the activity carried out on the spot. In the meanwhile, a period of adaptation to new demands was established (until the 31st of March of 2007).

² In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle devotes two of its chapters to the *problems* of pleasure and happiness.

correspond to. So, the pleasure associated with a good activity is good and pleasure associated with a bad activity is perverse.

Going back to the notion of *happiness* itself, let us once more recall Aristotle, according to whom happiness is the «goal of all human being», a goal one seeks to achieve by itself and not a means that would relate to the search for something else outside happiness itself. In this sense, we can say happiness is not necessarily coincident with pleasure. Happy life, according to Aristotle, is the life consistent with virtue, which takes place in the effort and not in diversion. It is not by chance the thinker distinguishes intellectual activities from activities of the senses. To the first ones can one truly associate the virtue of happiness, or, better said, of *perfect happiness*. The most virtuous activities and pleasures are associated to knowledge and wisdom. It is interesting to note that, for Aristotle, the perfect activity is the contemplative activity. In fact, the philosopher defends «happiness is rooted in leisure, as we work to get leisure and make war to get peace». «Happiness is, therefore, a sort of contemplation».

In the *Letter on Happiness*, Epicurus, founder, along with Zeno of Citium, of one of the two main Hellenistic philosophical currents (Epicureanism and Stoicism), departs radically from Aristotle, when affirming individualism in response to the crisis of the *polis*, the social and the City-States. Advising the refusal of public life, Epicurus advocated that the essential object of philosophy was to lead us to happiness along the shortest path. Unable to be found outside ourselves, happiness, to the philosopher, would correspond to a «quality of existence, achievable in life and, if not obtained in this world, it will be forever lost». Avoiding suffering and restlessness, in order «to reach the stage where one does not suffer in the body and is not disturbed in the soul» translates, according to Epicurus, the possible formula of happiness. Epicurus tells Menoeceus, his privileged recipient: «Accustom yourself to believing that death is nothing to us, for good and evil reside in sensation».

As for Seneca, though admitting agreement with some of the aspects of Epicurus' philosophy, he formulates, in *Of a Happy Life*, his understanding of happiness differently. Firstly, whilst sharing the point of view on the affirmation of individualism, Seneca sees the «crowd» and the spirit of «imitation» it has as an obstacle to finding the true path or route to happiness. The philosopher says «the opinion of the crowd is a sign of the worst. Let us, therefore, search for what is the best and not what is the most common, what will put us in possession of an eternal happiness and not what has the approval of the ordinary». In particular, Seneca considers the separation of true happiness, which would be «an inner and hidden beauty», from what affirms itself

through mere appearance, that is to say, mere pleasure. Unlike happiness, associated with virtue and wisdom, «pleasure leads to a point at which it ceases, and knows its end from the beginning ». True happiness, only reachable on condition of a healthy body and soul, would thus be «a life in accordance to its own nature», which means a life in accordance to virtue as a simultaneously high, sublime and real thing. Or, in other words, happiness corresponds to a stadium of unconcealment, that is to say, the discovery, beyond appearances, of nearby objects we passed by without seeing them³.

The history of thinking gives an account of different notions of happiness. Transporting us to Modernity, we see that happiness is necessarily associated with the satisfaction of desires, as well as with material well-being. In place of the old moral and religious condemnation of pleasure that Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* and the *Spirit of Capitalism* try to clarify, the inalienable right to happiness reigns in the consumer society. In particular, May 68, especially with Sartre, promotes the inversion of values, in the defense of the *inner* freedom and the right to pleasure. Contrary to the idea of spiritual happiness or even the idea of denial of happiness associated with pleasure, that the Augustinian pessimism had defended, modernity proposes a vision of man according to which he is a being of sensation and desire.

Pascal Bruckner (2002), in *Perpetual Euphoria*, proposes a paradoxical definition of happiness. The author (*Ibidem*: 15) says:

Our time tells us a strange fable: that of a society devoted to hedonism, to which everything becomes the cause of irritation and of torture. Unhappiness is not only unhappiness: it is, even worse, the failure of happiness.

In fact, after the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the promise of happiness directed to all humanity became an ethical imperative to the Western society. Lipovetsky (2006), referring to the society of hyper-consumption, talks about the paradoxical nature of happiness too. In the words of the author (*Ibidem*: 12):

The hedonist requests are ubiquitous. Restlessness, disappointment, social and personal insecurity increase. These are some of the aspects that turn the hyper-consumption society into the civilization of the paradoxical happiness.

³ On the notion of «real happiness», in *Of the Happy Life*, Seneca says: This good is placed not far off, we will find it, we need only to know where to stretch out our hands; but now it is as if we were in the midst of darkness, passing objects near at hand without seeing them....».

The contemporary daily experience, that Maffesoli (1979) characterizes through the notion of *presenteeism*, referring to the primacy and the worship of the present, to the detriment of the idea of a progressive movement towards a promising future, affects, in particular, the very notion of happiness. Associated with the possibilities of human accomplishment, happiness does not cease to be part of a widespread disbelief, projected as a fiction eternally alienated from the existence at the present moment. At the same time, the experience of the moment has a greater tragic intensity, thus favoring the meaning of ephemerality, which motivates consumption in general and legitimates, in particular, the role of advertising.

2. *Clean City*, a case

The public discussion created by the *São Paulo, Clean City* case counts with the great advocates of regulation, planning and discipline (urban planners, architects and tourism agents), on the one hand, and, on the other, with advertisers, announcers, business professionals and artists, who weave harsh criticism to the Law, as their own practices have been violently affected as a result of its implementation. Not confining to the extinction of the outdoor advertising (with the exception with the one linked to street furniture, apart from some other exceptions), the project *Clean City* has also extended its action to the erasing of murals and graffiti from some areas in the city. The efficient ochre brush with which the city was cleaned even went so far as to make tabula rasa of well-known works of public/urban art of renowned aesthetic and cultural value, as is the case of the Gémeos (Twins)⁴, artists with international notoriety who saw one of their works literally erased⁵ in the Centre of São Paulo.

However, the *São Paulo, Clean City* project was presented as an international case in Shanghai World Expo 2010. Following the notion that it is an «example to be followed by other municipalities», Marcos Caramuru, Consul of Brazil in Shanghai, synthesized the idea, justifying the transformations in the urban landscape of São Paulo: «a country that is modernizing itself, which has economic, business potential and is conquering more and more space in the international scenery». In fact, the São Paulo Pavilion was located, at the time of exhibition, in the Urban Best Practices Area.

⁴ "Otávio and Gustavo Pandolfo, internationally known as the Gémeos (Twins), were interviewed last Monday (14/12), on TV Cultura's Roda Viva programme – a space usually reserved for politicians and celebrities -. Talking about the fact that graffiti has conquered a place as a form of art and even reached museums, the Twins took the opportunity to poke the Prefecture of SP, which had erased a mural made by the duo, on an access to the 23 de Maio Avenue, in the centre of the city". ('Arte - Os Gêmeos criticam Cidade Limpa', *BR Press*, São Paulo, qui, 17 de Dezembro de 2009) ('Art – The Twins criticize the Clean City' *BR Press*, São Paulo, Wed., 17 of December of 2009).

⁵ It should be noted that São Paulo was, until recently, often referred to as the «capital of graffiti».

Such an event denounces, firstly, an implicit and immediate association between advertising and «visual pollution». Advertising is somehow compared to «litter» that desirably should be «cleaned» from the landscape. Secondly, taking into account the above understanding of advertising, this is regarded as a social problem. It is on behalf of tourism and leisure, but also invoking «the aesthetic, cultural and environmental well-being of the population», that the *Clean City* Law seeks to legitimize itself, phantomizing about the pre-existing chaos and «savage visual».

At the same time, merchants, advertisers, announcers and other professionals of the area strongly react to the negative social and economic impacts resulting from the implementation of the Law. In 2007, there was the publication of a small book of Chronicles entitled *São Paulo, City Clean*, by Gustavo Piqueira, which expressed the particular difficulties of traders, resulting from the regulation of designated «indicative ads» (banners). Through a semi-fictional and ironic record, the author seeks to give visibility to small-great tragedies of everyday life. Under a somewhat form of poetic denunciation, Piqueira exposes the absurdity of some concrete situations as a result, namely, of the implementation of strict norms about scale, measurement and language economy limits that would have compromised, in some cases, the informative, the phatic and other functions of the message. Unexpectedly, however, the need to adequate the existing language features to the imperatives of Law, on the other hand, stimulated the tradesmen's creativity...

Let us consider art. 3 of the aforementioned Law, which exposes the main argument that serves as its rhetoric basis:

Art. 3. The objective of the landscape planning of the São Paulo Municipal Chamber is to serve public interest in accordance to the person's fundamental rights and the needs of the environmental comfort, with the improvement of the quality of urban life, by ensuring, among others, the following:

I - the aesthetic, cultural and environmental well-being of the population;

II - the security of buildings and of the population;

III - the enhancement of the natural and the built environment;

IV - security, fluidity and comfort in the movement of vehicles and pedestrians;

V - the perception and the understanding of the reference elements of the landscape;

VI - the preservation of cultural memory;

VII - a preservação e a visualização das características peculiares dos logradouros e das fachadas;

VIII - the preservation and the display of the peculiar characteristics of public places and facades;

IX - the easy access and use of the functions and services of collective interest in roads and public places;

X - the quick and easy access to emergency services such as firemen, ambulances and the police;

XI - the balance of interests of the various agents operating in the city to promote improvement of the municipal landscape.

Firstly, we highlight the fact that the *São Paulo, Clean City* Law legitimates itself, in discursive terms, based on the defense of the «environmental comfort needs», on the «improvement of the quality of urban life», as well as on the defense of «aesthetic, cultural and environmental well-being». To the relation with the urban environment are thus ideally associated material values of pleasure and well-being. Also note the expressions used at the head of article: «public interest» and «fundamental rights of the human person». Understanding well-being as a possible way to translate, in Modern Age, the pleasure and happiness, one can say, in Adam Smith's style, that such a formulation underlies the conviction that there is a sort of «natural right to happiness». The «landscape organization» the law aims to promote is presented as a good that is simultaneously necessary to the well-being and to individual and collective happiness. Invoking Jeremy Bentham, according to whom it was important to promote «the greatest happiness for the greatest number», we can say that what is defended here is a notion of a simultaneously hedonistic and utilitarian happiness. Regulating the Western society since its secularization, with the Enlightenment, the election of the satisfaction of personal desires, but also the «promise of happiness» for all constitute the main lines of conduct which are indispensable to justify political and social action. Daily urban life forms, from this point of view, a particular sphere of intersection of private and common interests. In defense of *the greatest happiness possible for as many people as possible*, the Law occupies a fundamental role, because, as Bentham would say, «if everyone should act so as to promote one's happiness and the happiness of others to the utmost, it is necessary that laws encourage it, directing the person's activity».

Also according to art. 3 of the Law, one of the main objectives would be to defend: «the perception and understanding of the reference elements of the landscape». In other words, the elimination or the restrictions on outdoor advertising has, as objective, the clearing of obstacles to the perception of the referential reality of landscape, which is supposedly hidden by advertising. This concern is not dissociated, once more, from Guy Debord's thinking. According to the author, in the consumer society, referred to as *The Society of the Spectacle* by Debord, «the sensible world is replaced by images». Inspired by the landscape perception in *America*, Jean Baudrillard too refers to the phenomenon of deterritorialization, that is to say, to the phenomenon of transformation of the territory into an image, partly operated by outdoor advertising, which will make the circulation experience similar to the cinematic experience. On a rather famous passage, Baudrillard says «we do not know if it is the cinema that is made at the image of the landscape or if it is the landscape that is made at the image of the cinema».

Proceeding with the *São Paulo, Clean City* Law subject, it should be noted that, implicitly, outdoor advertising is seen as an apparent and misleading surface, a surface of concealment of reference elements of the landscape, that is to say, mainly of the architecture and of the «natural environment». Architects, urban planners and tourism promoters in São Paulo have been tenacious defenders of the law, invoking, precisely, the appreciation of the built heritage, as well as of the structures and other urban materials equipment⁶.

Seneca's words, in *Of the Happy Life*, become appropriate to the case when he says, rejecting what «shines on the outside, but inside it is just misery»: «Let us seek for a

⁶ Cf. Moyses, Jeferson Munhoz and Wada, Elisabeth. São Paulo Mais Hospitaleira: Projecto Cidade Limpa. *Turydes - revista de investigação em turismo e desenvolvimento local*. Nº1 outubro-outubro 2007 (A More Welcoming São Paulo: Clean City Project. *Turydes – research journal on tourism and local development*. No.1 October 2007), available at www.eumed.net/rev/turydes/ or Moyses, Jeferson Munhoz and Wada, Elisabeth. São Paulo Mais Hospitaleira: Projecto Cidade Limpa [Revista Electrónica de Turismo Cultural] Número Especial - 2008 (A More Welcoming São Paulo: Clean City Project.[Eletronic Journal on Cultural Tourism] Special Number - 2008). In this context, also note the following passage: "In spite of all the permissiveness of existing law before "Clean City Law "(Law 15.525 of March 2, 2003), its approval has raised discussions in various sectors of society. On the one side, there are the major part of the architects, urban-planners and those governing, who argue in favour of the radical withdrawal of outdoor advertising in order to "clean" the image of the city of São Paulo and expose the beauty of the architecture and the urban structure hidden behind the posters, as inspection is ineffective and advertising is considered, by some, harmful to public health. On the other side, there are mainly merchants and advertisers, who see negative social and economic impacts with the obligatory withdrawal of advertising from public space visible". Mendes, Camila Faccioni (2006) – Paisagem Urbana: uma mídia redescoberta. São Paulo: Editora SENAC. (Urban Landscape: a rediscovered media. São Paulo: Editora SENAC.)

good which is more than its appearance, but which is solid, constant with an inner and hidden beauty; for this let us delve.»

We can say that the tendency to simulation that characterizes the mass society is what, somehow, the *São Paulo, Clean City* Law intends to counteract. A certain nostalgia for the real seems to serve as inspiration to some of the arguments invoked. The restitution of authentic experiences through the elision of artificiality, in the framework of the everyday relation with space and urban landscape, acts an objective which is opposite to the world paradigm of the city of spectacle⁷. The semiotization or the disneylandization of the contemporary city, built in celebration of the culture of consumption and leisure, can no longer rely on São Paulo as a particularly illustrative spatial form, or expressive, namely, of the post-modern euphoria, that is to say, of the so-called «hyperspace». In seeking to regulate the excess of information and the hyperinflation of signs on the landscape, the *São Paulo, Clean City* Law thus invokes, apparently, the right to freedom and to one's critical conscience.

Charles Baudelaire (*The Painter of Modern Life*) had already spoken of the inhibition of the ability to assimilate information in modernity and so did Walter Benjamin (who even proposed the concept of «shock» to designate the sudden capture of the unprovided unconscious) later, as well as George Simmel, among others.

While aiming at erasing the marks, from its surface, of its own hallucinatory environment, São Paulo simultaneously frees itself from enlisting in the global network that other hipper-mediatised major centers articulate: New York (Times Square), Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Tokyo, etc. On the other hand, projecting itself, to some extent, on the model of historical-city, it approaches the paradigm of European city. In particular, it is known that the city of Barcelona has served as a source of inspiration for Prefecture of São Paulo for purposes of political decision and the drafting of the *Law*. The *Barcelona, posa't guapa* (*Barcelona, embellish yourself*) Project was the basis of the *São Paulo, Clean City* project, which resulted, for a period of about 10 years, in the removal of billboards in certain areas of the city, as well as in the recovery and valorization of facades⁸.

⁷ On the referred paradigm, cf. Vázquez, C. G. (2004: 78-86).

⁸ On the referred project, see Moyses, Jeferson Munhoz and Wada, Elisabet. São Paulo Mais Hospitaleira: Projecto Cidade Limpa [Revista Electrónica de Turismo Cultural] Número Especial – 2008 (A More welcoming São Paulo: Clean City Project [Electronic Journal of Cultural Tourism] Special Issue – 2008): "[Barcelona, posa't guapa" Project]... one of the major references in urban beauty according to Regina Monteiro, architect and urban planner, creator of the São Paulo Clean City Project. From a decadent industrial port, the capital of Catalonia evolved to a tourist power and a reference in architecture. The transformation process started in 1986 with the removal of billboards and the restoration of more than

It seems that the *São Paulo, Clean City* project is inspired by the culturalist vision of the city, which has met its peak through the urbanism "scientific" re-foundation with Aldo Rossi and the Trend, around the sixties in Europe. This vision is characterized, first of all, by the promotion of the person's spiritual values, instead of one's material needs, the promotion of the local identity and traditions, as well as the appreciation of the aesthetic and artistic sense of the city at the expense of its functional logic⁹. The exclusion of outdoor advertising from that same artistic and aesthetic sense presupposed by the basis of the Law is precisely what can be debated here. According to this same Law, such a value is associated, almost exclusively, to architecture, as well as to certain «natural», structural and topographical elements, sometimes of historical or patrimonial value (buildings, plazas, streets...). Similarly to the *Trend* movement in Italy, the «architecture-city» or «discipline-city», as it was then called, that is to say, the conception of the city, from the strict point of view of the rational construction, alongside with the increase of its historic value, seems to have been, in fact, one of the main inspiring reasons for the creation of the *Clean City* project. By defining the advertising nature, precisely, by its ephemeral and absolutely presenteeistic nature, this becomes a threat to a culturalist and historic vision of the city.

But the aesthetic and ideological paradigms underlying the *Clean City* Project are to be found much earlier in time. Even to the Greeks, "the disorder was sign of a state of crisis in society" (Quessada, 2010: 174). On the other hand, in Modernity, harmony, stability, unity and order persisted as indisputable values, which oriented practices and urban policies. In the late 19th century, in Paris, the Haussmannization of the city or its «strategic beautification» is an example of that¹⁰.

3. In the refusal or in the pursuit of happiness??

Enfin, du point de vue du politique, la publicité représente une tentative parodique, donc ultime, de sauver le sens et la représentation comme seuls modes possibles pour concevoir l'idée d'une collectivité en acte. Même si c'est sur le mode altéré de la société de consommation de soi, la publicité propose la dernière version de la représentation, cette fiction nécessaire au

5000 facades, supported by a strong communication action that lasted for 10 years and tax exemption for the population for works on residences or trade".

⁹ Cf. Vásquez, C. G. (2004: 5-14).

¹⁰ On Haussmann's urban policies, Walter Benjamin (2002: 57) says: "Haussmann's ideal in city planning consisted of long straight streets opening onto broad perspectives. This ideal corresponds to the current trend in the 19th century of ennobling the technical needs through artistic pseudo-ends. The temples of the bourgeoisie's spiritual and secular power were to find their apotheosis within the framework of these long streets."

commerce symbolique entre les humains afin qu'il y ait du collectif. (Quessada, 2002: 186).

The *São Paulo, Clean City* project seems to belatedly want to pursue the dream of modernity. Well-being and happiness are understood under the light of the Platonic-Cartesian thinking, that is to say, the refusal of disorder, of chaos, of excess¹¹. For Plato, the materialization of philosophy in the reality of the city made its submission to the order compulsory, in sum, the universal order of the *logos*. The ideal of philosophy might as well be considered as ascetic, built in the distance of the world and in the denial of the senses. As Socrates would say, happiness will reside so not in the possession of valuable assets, but in losing the desire for them (Quessada, 2002: 177).

The «city of the senses», according to the *Clean City* Project, should be limited to architectural forms, that is to say, to the forms necessary to the preservation of the collective memory. The culturalist paradigm which once defended the historical-city now tries to impose itself through the attempt of a presumed restitution of the «good image» (Kevin Lynch, 2004) to the city. Kevin Lynch defines «good image» as the way inhabitants perceive the city, as well as the possibility to build a mental image which is capable of facilitating orientation in space. And precisely, it is not irrelevant to note that, in response to the invocation of the space orientation and circulation issue as one of the main arguments that underlies the law, there were also contrary opinions that refer to the loss of value in terms of the referential that served this same orientation as a result of the extinction of outdoor advertising.

The extinction of the external advertising from the city of São Paulo, however, means much more than a change in the aspect of the landscape or even a transformation in the orientation in space by its inhabitants. Its eradication compromises the concrete political space of the city. Invoking Quessada (2002: 171-208), we can affirm that advertising arose precisely as the materialization of the corporatist interests of philosophy, its body, its becoming world. The inclusion of advertising in the *polis* serves, in this sense, the social link amongst bystanders. According to Quessada (2002: 183), philosophy, once excluded from the *polis*, moved to the advertising discourse, which will, in turn, fulfill a political function through the possibility to confront of ideas it enables. Asserting itself in its rhetoric and persuasive vocation, advertising does not

¹¹ On the phenomenon of global screening, and referring in particular to advertising, Lipovetsky and Serroy (2007: 267-272) critically reflect on the «excess-image» installed in contemporary culture.

cease to consider itself, according to the author, as rightful heir of philosophy. Through the use of a simultaneously rational and argumentative language, advertising does not exempt itself from sheltering Goodness and Truth, values once strictly confined to philosophy and in contrast with the practice of everyday life.

However, as Qualter (1994) refers, a puritan conscience still resists in our society. The author says: "despite the massive cultural transformation in recent decades, some puritan values still survive, a fact that helps explaining a certain ambivalence as far as advertising is concerned." (*Ibidem*: 46). In fact, we can weigh the possibility that the debate resulting from the extinction of outdoor advertising in the city of São Paulo indicates the implicit resistance, in contemporary times, of an existing tension between philosophy, in its most idealizing vocation, according to which happiness is its own categorical imperative, and the rhetorical practice, the art of persuading, heiress to poetry and sophistry. In a philosophical perspective, happiness is understood as the pursuit of permanent and durable sense of all things. Precisely, publicity is intertwined with the image and with the simulacrum, being perceived as contrary to all references, that is to say, as «an unbearable present imprinting» (2002, Quessada: 185). In this sense, the discursive justification of the *Clean City* project defends the need for the annihilation of the images and the simultaneous reposition of the architectural or the natural frame. In place of the simulacrum, the alleged presence of referent itself is defended.

However, we should not forget that proposing the replacement of the world by its ideal representation, advertising paradoxically shares the purpose of its own philosophy, that is to say, it "presents itself as the providential speech that can, by itself, lead humans, integrated in society, in the sense of individual and collective happiness." (Quessada, 2002: 185). According to Quessada (*Idem*: 191-192):

Advertising represents the way in which philosophy materializes itself in the world through a victory of democratic ideals. It gives form, reality and relevance to the philosophical idea of a community rationally governed by a speech to which citizens «freely» adhere, that is to say, through a total and voluntary servitude to the unifying order of the rational *logos*.

In the context of postmodern society, happiness is often, as Lipovetsky (2006) points out, a paradoxical feeling. On the one hand, the material welfare is promised us as an access door to a desired happy life. On the other hand, once submitted to the universal order of consumption, individuals become, at the same time, captives in the anxiety, the fear and the insecurity this same order stimulates.

Alongside with the ethical issue, there is the question on advertising aesthetics. Taking as a starting point Jean Baudrillard's statement, according to which advertising is, in itself, the product that, first of all, we consume, we can ask ourselves about the importance of the aesthetic experience of consumption as an ingredient of «happiness» itself. Designed, in particular, to be consumed by the gaze, outdoor advertising offers the possibility of the simple pleasure of a fleeting imaginary walk. In a city like São Paulo, although this is likely to provide a certain cult of indifference to the image, the daily practice of movement, with all the inherent setbacks involved (traffic queues ...), opens, sporadically, to the desire of rest and distraction of the gaze...

4. Desire for order vs. chaos experience

Advertising shares, with the Platonic-Cartesian philosophy, a certain desire for a «unifying» order. However, the *Clean City* Project assumes that outdoor advertising reproduces the disorderly organicity of a sort of «body-without-organs» (Deleuze and Guattari), that is to say, the mixture of shapes and functions in which the dreaded urban chaos is translated. Emptied of content, advertising empties itself from its own discursive function, once perceived in its strict formal nature and, as such, as undifferentiated part of a fractal fabric that needs to be fought¹². This becomes equally contradictory, given that the existence of an order is admitted in the framework of the theory of the chaos. Several contemporary urban planners refer that entropy or the chaotic appearance of the large cities, in particular with regard to some of the North American cities, characterizes the evanescent condition of the so called late-capitalism.

Most importantly, one should to take into consideration the permanent mobility nature that makes any dream of fixation or permanence of the ontological notion of town impossible. The urban space is, perhaps, increasingly liquefied and its possible materiality rhizomatically finds a way of shaping itself in the permanent fluidity. In this sense, outdoor advertising only serves an unstoppable transformation which is developed, through the relation, so often tensile, between the individual and social. In itself, outdoor advertising is not a good or an evil. It only participates in the infirmity, more or less visible, of the lived-city...

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¹² Vásquez expresses his point of view on the «fractal» (defined as simple geometric shape which repeats itself in increasingly small levels, indicating the existence of a common form unifying nature), applied to an organicist vision of the city (2004: 123-126).

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